

Powered by  Clickability**EXCLUSIVE: Black Friday surprisingly strong for jewelers**

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New York—Several jewelry retailers from across the nation who spoke with *National Jeweler* today say sales were higher than expected over Black Friday weekend, while others project a strong holiday season with the majority of sales in the last two weeks before Christmas.

At Evan James Ltd. in Brattleboro, Vt., owner Evan James Deutsch says Black Friday is usually just a normal sales day for him; however, this year traffic was high, which he credits in part to the promotions he created for the store's recent anniversary.

"It was an overall good day," Deutsch says, "with lots of enthusiasm and traffic."

Sales were also high on Saturday but dropped off around 2 p.m., Deutsch says, adding that most of the store's holiday sales happen a couple of weeks before Christmas.

At Allen's Jewelers in Albany, Ga., owner Steve Allen says Black Friday is typically not a big deal for his store either because it's far away from the mall; however, Saturday's sales were much higher than normal.

Allen says his jewelry is more expensive this year compared with 2006, but hasn't heard complaints.

"Most people aren't barking at price points," he says.

Allen also says he cut back on inventory this year and added lower price-point pieces to balance his stock.

Aaron Penaloza of C. Aaron Penaloza Jewelers in San Antonio, Texas, also had an unusually successful Black Friday with "wonderful" sales, followed by a strong Saturday.

At Farmer's Jewelry in Lexington, Ky., owner Bill Farmer Jr. says Black Friday was an "excellent" day for his store too and estimated that sales were up over last year.

"Right now, I'm more optimistic than I thought I would be," he says.

While nationally retailers reported slower sales on big-ticket items, Farmer says that wasn't the case in his store. He says diamonds and engagement ring mountings were top sellers over the weekend, which he notes was unusual for this time of year and not necessarily what his store had been pushing.

At Van Rensselaer Jewelers in Billings, Mont., owner Steven Morse reports that big-ticket items also sold well in his shop over the weekend, including the sale of a 2-carat pink diamond. Other top-selling items included diamond pendants and earrings.

Morse says sales were up overall, and he anticipates colored stones—both diamonds and other gems—to be hot sellers this holiday season.